Professional Development Plan

IT 7360

Professional Decision Making

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**I. Teaching Background**

I have taught multiple subject areas including Health, Physical Education, and Engineering and Technology. My bachelor’s degree is from Georgia Southern University in Health and Physical Education. I taught Health and Physical Education for three years before switching to Engineering and Technology. After a year in Engineering and Technology, I am currently serving as my middle school’s Graduation Coach which is part of the Race to the Top grant. I am very blessed to have this position because I get to work with students labeled as “at-risk” for being potential drop outs. I have a caseload of students that I implement various interventions with and progress monitoring checks. We develop professional relationships where I have the chance to be a positive role model in their lives. My job is very rewarding and I wish the upcoming year was not the last year for funding for it. After the upcoming year, I will be seeking a classroom teaching position again either in Physical Education or Engineering and Technology.

**II. NBPTS Proposition 1: Teachers are committed to students and their learning.**

I plan to promote “deep learning” in my classroom. I can provide many opportunities for my students to participate in deep learning. One of Confucius’ five virtues, right knowledge, is distinctly appropriate for how teaching should be carried out (Waley, 1989). I can maintain the right knowledge by participating in professional learning. I believe that participating in on-going professional development is necessary in order for me to maintain and further my educational knowledge. The professional development sessions should focus on many things including research-based instructional strategies, classroom management techniques, and cultural proficiency. Confucius wrote about always staying “hungry for knowledge” which is a main idea in my educational philosophy (Waley, 1989). I believe that teachers who know they learn just as much from the students as the students do from them are to be admired. I also believe that when you do not know something, the best thing to do is admit it. Confucius wrote, “Do you want to know what knowledge is? When you know something, recognize that you know it, and when you don’t know something, recognize that you don’t know it. That’s knowledge” (Book 2, Chapter 17). Having the right attitude and moral courage, two of Confucius’ five virtues, are imperative in my ability to instruct students (Waley, 1989). My instruction should focus on increasing student knowledge and self-motivation so that they learn and want to explore their creativity and imagination. I will encourage my students to dream big dreams and then go and achieve them no matter the odds. I could not agree more when Hess (2009) states, “What we need is an education system that teaches deep knowledge, that values creativity and originality, and that values thinking skills” (p. 7).

Another of Confucius’ five virtues, right procedure, is necessary for the most beneficial learning (Waley, 1989). I believe that Conley (2011) accurately describes the difference between right and wrong procedure when he states, “Content mastery is not sufficient. As frustrating as it may be to hear, simply getting students to recall some facts or answer questions correctly on a test does not make them ready for college and careers – nor is it likely to guarantee high performance on the common assessments” (p. 20). I will teach my students to use their critical thinking skills and not just simple memorization techniques. Students will benefit much more from acquiring problem solving skills when they reach real world situations. Conley (2011) also recommends students being active learners. He describes an intriguing curriculum when he states, “curriculum that includes interesting problems, investigations, debates, simulations, games, Socratic questioning, presentations, projects, and other forms of learning that demand engagement will help maximize retention of key content and concepts” (p. 20). Students learn best when our instructional strategies are not aimed at increasing standardized test scores. When our focus is on drilling facts and memorization, we fail to recognize the impact we have on their diminishing critical thinking skills. Conley (2011) states, “It is actually more difficult for students to retain the myriad bits of content they encounter during the school year when they are taught through test-prep” (p. 18). These are the ideas I will seek to fill my classroom with. In doing so, my students will be much more engaged and involved in their own learning and experience more meaningful instruction. NCLB stripped teachers of the motivation to encourage deep, meaningful learning. Instead, teachers began teaching to the test and promoting rote memorization and recalling of facts instead of a deep understanding. It is my goal to help reverse the devastating effects that NCLB left on the way students learn.

**III. NBPST Proposition 2: Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.**

No matter what subject area I end up teaching in the years to come, staying up to date on best practices is a must. If Physical Education is the route that I go, I will become a member of AAHPERD, which is the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance as well as GAHPERD, which is the Georgia Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance. These organizations have yearly conferences which are great for professional learning and making connections with other educators. On a smaller scale, in the past years, our district has allowed for physical education teachers to have one day during post-planning to meet and discuss units that we teach. We have shared many great ideas with each other. I was the youngest physical educator and many of the practices that I used were very up to date. I graduated in 2009 from Georgia Southern University and a very big part of my instructional strategies is a model that I learned from one of my classes called the Sport Education Model. This model promotes cooperation, responsibility, and less of a “winning is everything” attitude. My students have thoroughly enjoyed learning through the Sport Education Model and many other physical educators at other schools have begun to implement it within their classrooms.

If Engineering and Technology is my next endeavor, I will rejoin CTAE, which is Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education. CTAE offers many conferences throughout the year where they share up to date research-based instructional strategies like differentiated instruction and also new and exciting projects and content to introduce to students.

I have recently obtained certified in Early Childhood Education. I come from a family of elementary education teachers but I have never taught the subject myself. If this door is opened for me in the future, it is going to take a lot of resourcing and working with co-workers to really make sure my students are benefiting. I took Children’s Literature as an elective two semesters ago and loved learning about many great books to use in the classroom.

**IV. NBPTS Proposition 3: Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.**

Managing student progress is necessary for increasing student success. Managing student progress includes many different strategies like classroom management and motivation. My classroom management has greatly improved from my first year of teaching. This is mainly due to getting to know my students and coming up with unique ways to make connections with them. I have found that if you can find one thing in common, no matter how small, it can help to develop the connection you have with a student. My students are taught the classroom rules at the beginning of the semester and I do not navigate away from them. I consistently refer back to them throughout every day lessons and make sure students are aware of them.

I have found various techniques within the Sport Education Model that promote extrinsic and also intrinsic motivation for my students. For example, they get daily points as a team that I keep up with on a poster in the gym. They also get daily individual points based on attitude and participation.

I implement frequent progress monitoring checks but I need to display them so that they are private but students can still check their progress on a weekly basis. In order to do so, I will use student identification numbers and post progress by each standard. The students will be able to check their progress and still remain anonymous to the class. I will also strive to post more specific feedback on assignments. I will blank out student names if they are on the front of assignments and leave comments on positive/negative aspects. This way, the students will understand more thoroughly where they went wrong or right and they can correct it the next time.

**V. NBPTS Proposition 4: Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.**

From experience, I know that students enjoy using technology in the classroom. It has been a great success whenever I have chosen to implement technology into my lessons. As part of my Professional Development Plan, I would like to create more opportunities for students to use technology. I will make many changes to my instructional approaches to add more technology use with every day assignments. We are currently dealing with students who are from what is popularly called the iGeneration. Our students spend so much time multitasking that many times, traditional instructional strategies tend to bore them. I want to find exciting ways to intrigue my students. Rosen (2011) states, “The iGeneration is a creative, multimedia generation. They think of the world as a canvas to paint with words, sights, sounds, video, music, web pages, and anything that they can create” (p. 20). Students are interested in using technology as a pathway to learning. Rosen (2011) suggests allowing students to use their iPods while doing their work. To an educator, this might seem distracting. To a student, it may keep them focused on the task at hand. I must remember that our students are different and have different needs. This does not mean I will allow them to take advantage of this idea, though. It can be hard to allow student use of technology in the classroom because of the potential for misuse; however, through careful observation and good classroom management, the task can be implemented.

In the technological age that we currently live in, I simply cannot ask students to ignore the technologies available to them while they are at school. They are involved in so many different things outside of school like text messaging, emailing, using Facebook or MySpace and other social networks, playing video games, and watching television. Our students can process many of these things at one time. I must take advantage of the iGeneration’s characteristics of multitasking. Rosen (2011) had an interesting finding as he states, “My research, and that of others, has shown that when kids interact online they are more honest and less shy than when they are in a face-to-face environment. Allowing some class discussion to happen online will encourage the shy students, those who never talk in class, to express themselves” (p. 21). Allowing students to expose their individual thoughts through anonymous systems such as these can help bring out knowledge that open classroom discussions would not. I must take ideas like these and be creative in getting the most out of my students.

Rosen (2010) gives many suggestions on implementing technology in the classroom. He recommends letting students “write some essays using all textisms and then translate each other’s into English” (p. 22). While some teachers may frown upon this, particularly English Language Arts teachers, it will get the creativity flowing for my students and they will enjoy the task as well. I will focus not on the mechanics of their writing itself, but the quality of the content in which they share. Many students have great thoughts and ideas but do not necessarily share them because of the way they feel comfortable communicating. If students are given this freedom to communicate the way they are used to, I believe I will see more depth in student learning.

I will also allow my students to have more options for using technology for projects. For example, students will be given various options for presentations such as: web design, cartoon animation via sites such as toondoo.com, Prezi and PowerPoint presentations, and voice recording. For an introduction project, the students will examine the three technological periods and the inventions that were developed during those times. The students will be able to choose from the above options for their final presentation to the class.

My students will also be given the assignment of creating a company and developing advertisements for it. They will be given many different options including commercial making, billboard design, web design, and business card design. All of these projects will be designed using technology.

The use of technology can greatly increase student participation and also establish excitement in the classroom that NCLB demolished via high stakes testing. High stakes testing has had drastic effects on our students and teachers. As Nichols and Berliner (2008) state, “High-stakes testing encourages teachers to view students not in terms of their potential, or what unique or new qualities they bring to the learning environment, but rather as test-score increasers or suppressors” (p. 16). This is exactly what I want to avoid – labeling my students as either an increaser or a suppressor. Our students are so much more than a test score. They are different and unique and can bring many exciting ideas to the classroom.

**VI. NBPTS Proposition 5: Teachers are members of learning communities.**

At my school, professional learning occurs weekly. I consider this a strength of mine because occasionally I will deliver the professional learning sessions. I have delivered professional learning on Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS) and also on Response to Intervention-Behavior (RTI-B). I have extensive knowledge on these two areas and I currently lead both programs at my school.

I plan to involve myself in professional learning specifically in regards to multicultural education. After taking a multicultural course last semester, I found that I have deficits that need to be explored and strengthened. Not only will this increase my connection with all of my students, but I plan to implement multicultural education into my curriculum. Students will be much more comfortable sharing their thoughts and ideas with the class if they know they can be themselves. I found an upcoming Multicultural Professional Development Conference at the Career Center of the University of Georgia on January 28th, 2014 from 2:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. I have emailed the appropriate contact person and I await more information on sign up deadlines and pricing.

Our students come from such diverse backgrounds and it is important to recognize and celebrate differences. In order to have a culturally celebrated environment, I will need to seek professional learning opportunities that involve multicultural education. I want to have extensive knowledge about racial groups in order to appropriately address racial and ethnic attitudes of students. As Banks and Banks (2012) state, “Make sure that your classroom conveys positive and complex images of various ethnic groups” (p. 195). If a successful multicultural curriculum is to be blended with the school curriculum, I must be prepared for the controversial issues that are sure to arise among our students. It is my hope that they leave my classroom interested and comfortable with different cultures.

One way to address these issues with students is to have students engage in role play. This enables the students “to express and to examine their attitudes, beliefs, and feelings related to racial prejudice and discrimination” (Banks and Banks, 2012, p. 191). I can also use various forms of resources outside of the textbook in order to convey different aspects of cultures. Increasing my own ethnic and cultural history can enhance my ability to integrate multicultural elements into the curriculum because my students will recognize a climate for sharing. My students need to see that I am open about my own ethnic and cultural history and that I am comfortable sharing. This should also motivate my students to do the same and “result in powerful learning for [my] students” (Banks and Banks, 2012, p. 191). I believe that taking part in these actions can increase my students’ knowledge of other cultures and also make them feel more comfortable sharing their ideas and cultural knowledge.

There are many things that affect multicultural education. Mainstream culture affects educators’ abilities to see and accommodate differences in students because mainstream culture does not have a “cultural perspective.” Banks and Banks (2012) also state that public school systems “marginalize differences and reinforce disparities” (p. 273). My way of teaching needs to work for all students so that they can reach their highest potential. I will begin the year with a multicultural theme that invites students to share their backgrounds. We will have discussions about controversial topics and I will make sure students know to be respectful. I will explain the importance of learning about different cultures. These discussions will become part of our curriculum and students will have the opportunity to research different cultures. After the first couple of weeks, we will choose one culture to study per week. This may be our start-up activity at the beginning of each class period. Students can bring in current events that relate to the specific culture and share with the class. It is my hope that infusing multicultural education in this way will promote a culturally responsive environment.

Banks and Banks (2012) write, “If schools cannot function without separating large numbers of children for ‘nonmainstream’ services outside the general education classroom, we need to challenge the culture of the classroom as one that is not reflecting the culture of communities” (p. 273). This quote makes me reflect on my school’s strategies for our EL students. Currently, they are pulled out of their academic classes for instructional time. Next year, they will be fully mainstreamed into all academic classes and teachers will be trained on teaching EL students with the assistance of an EL coach. I think this strategy will be much more beneficial and I am looking forward to the training I will receive that will help me to better serve our EL students. NCLB divided students up into subgroups which were then analyzed when test scores were received by schools. This division contributed to the multicultural divide that is present in our schools today. I believe that getting to know my students needs and backgrounds will only improve my instructional methods and help them to succeed in their endeavors.

The previously mentioned plans will help me to further my educational success with current and future students. Part of my plan is to help reverse the negative effects of *No Child Left Behind* and doing so will encourage students to reach their potential even in subject areas aside from reading and mathematics. It is my hope to encourage students to explore their creativity and hone in on their critical thinking skills. Through these plans, I can help students be excited and prepared for the real world.

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